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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003724

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KCUL](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: DISSIDENTS HOLD VIRTUAL RALLY AS TIGHT SECURITY  
MARKS 18TH ANNIVERSARY OF TIANANMEN

Classified By: Political Section Internal Unit Chief  
Susan A. Thornton. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

1. (C) The eighteenth anniversary of the June 4, 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen Square passed without incident in Beijing. Security presence in the Square was more visible and aggressive than last year, but in a break from past precedent, only a handful of activists were detained in advance of the anniversary and some were allowed to conduct personal remembrances on the Square. Dissidents held a "virtual rally" on June 3, involving about 500 participants, 90 percent of whom were inside China. Another virtual rally is planned for June 4, 8:00 p.m. Beijing time. End Summary.

#### Aggressive Security in the Square...

2. (C) During a visit to the Square on the morning of June 4, Poloff saw no protest activity but did witness the temporary detention of a Xinhua photographer, who was escorted from the Square, and aggressive policing in and around the Square. In addition to the usual sharp increase in security personnel, including a busload of riot police, a number of Security Bureau vans and squad cars circulated among the crowd of tourists continuously and security personnel searched the bags of all people entering the Square. The Xinhua photographer told Poloff after the incident, that he had been allowed to take pictures, but then was asked to verify his credentials. He said security officials were "afraid" of photos that might "embarrass China" but that nothing had happened that morning on the Square.

3. (C) There was no discernible security presence or June 4 activity at the family courtyard of former Party chief Zhao Ziyang, who spent the rest of his life in house arrest after supporting the students in 1989. Zhao's death two years ago sparked renewed calls for a reassessment of June 4. Beijing's most prestigious university campuses, Qinghua University and Beijing University, were also quiet. Students with whom Poloff talked expressed no interest in the anniversary, uniformly noting that the events happened so long ago, it made no impression on them. However, several students said there would be an online student discussion on the events of 1989 at a popular Beijing University bulletin board. When Poloff attempted to access the bulletin board, it was blocked. There was no commentary on the anniversary in Mainland media and no comments were apparent on Mainland chatrooms monitored by Emboffs.

#### ...But Restrictions on Activists More Relaxed

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¶4. (C) Rights activist Hu Jia told Poloff June 4 that he was placed under house arrest on May 25 immediately upon returning to Beijing from Fujian Province, where he and his wife, fellow activist, Zeng Jinyan attended Zeng's grandfather's funeral. Zeng told Poloff that she has been permitted to leave her home since returning to Beijing on June 2, but is followed closely wherever she goes. Democracy activist Liu Anjun has been under house arrest since June 2 but is able to access the Internet and take phone calls. Tiananmen activist Qi Zhiyong, who lost his legs when soldiers fired on demonstrators in 1989, was taken from his home to an undisclosed location on June 1, where he is being held incommunicado, according to Liu and Hu. The restrictions on Qi, Hu Jia said, are tight to prevent him from communicating with other activists or reporters who, he said, would certainly seek him out.

¶5. (C) Despite this crackdown on a few activists, according to Hu, measures imposed on activists by the Party this year are less stringent, constituting "a break from the trend of the previous 17 years." First, many activists can access Internet and telephone, which they could not do in previous years. Second, some who were placed under house arrest in previous years have been permitted to leave their homes. Tiananmen Mothers Ding Zilin and Zhang Xianling were permitted to attend remembrances for their children on June 3 and June 4. (Note: Western media quoted Hu Jia as stating that Zhang Xianling was

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subsequently placed under house arrest. End note.) Lawyer Pu Zhiqiang was permitted on the Square on June 3 for an interview with VOA. Pu was not permitted to enter the Square last year, when he sent out a text message encouraging activists to gather. Finally, Reuters reported on June 4 that it was not prevented from interviewing Bao Tong, a top aide of Zhao's who is generally kept under house arrest.

#### Virtual Rally Called First Open Discussion of June 4

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¶6. (C) In addition, on June 3 Hu Jia and Liu Anjun participated in what they termed a "large scale Internet-based meeting" to commemorate Tiananmen and discuss Tiananmen-related issues. The meeting began at about noon on June 3 and lasted for 5-6 hours. Hu said that this was the first "open" discussion of its kind in the 18 years since Tiananmen occurred, involving about 500 persons both inside and outside China. Ninety percent of participants, Liu estimated, were inside China. Hu said the discussion had been initiated on the suggestion of Wang Dan, a student leader in the Square on 1989 who now lives abroad. Hu Jia said that the large number of in-country participants signified that "more people are willing to stand up on the Tiananmen issue," particularly in the wake of pro-Beijing Hong Kong politician Ma Lik's statement last month denying that a massacre took place. Liu Anjun said the meeting was not intended to be secret. In fact, participants prepared for the possibility of interference to by pre-arranging several Skype "meeting rooms." Liu said authorities shut down the Skype "meeting room" where the meeting was taking place after about 2 hours. At that point, all the participants "migrated" to another room. Poloffs will monitor a second meeting scheduled for June 4 at 8 p.m.

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